

THURSDAY, APRIL 10 7:00 PM

Farallon Islands – A Place Like No Other

By Pete Warzybok, Point Blue Conservation Science



Mike Johns

Farallon Islands Wildlife

Register for this month's program on the MAS website's Speaker Series page.

Take a deep dive into the Farallon Islands, where Point Blue biologists have spent more than 58 years living and working on the islands. Learn about the 500 thousand seabirds, tens of thousands of pinnipeds, and other wildlife who call these islands home and hear about the threats they face living in an ever-changing environment and some conservation success stories.

Pete Warzybok is a Principal Scientist and Farallon Program Leader with Point Blue Conservation Science. Pete's work focuses on the ecology and conservation of marine ecosystems, overseeing research activities at Point Blue's long-term research station on Southeast Farallon Island. Pete has been with the Farallon Program since 2000, and his current research interests include the study of seabird diet and foraging ecology and the impact of ecosystem variability on breeding success and population dynamics of Farallon seabirds and pinnipeds.

THURSDAY, MAY 8 7:00 PM

Flycatchers

Cin-Ty Lee & Andy Birch, Rice University



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Larkspur Council Considers Unleashed Dogs at Piper Park

Responding to requests from dog owners and the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Larkspur City Council is considering diverging from history and city ordinance by allowing unleashed dogs at Piper Park. The recommendation came from the Commission to have a one-year Pilot Project, during which dogs would be allowed off leash in Piper Park from 6 to 9 AM

Similarities between this situation and the issues with the MMWD legal action are striking. Both MMWD and the City of Larkspur propose a Pilot Program to address a use (there e-bikes, here unleashed dogs) not currently allowed but where no enforcement is taking place, and some of the same exceptions to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) were used to justify avoiding compliance with CEQA. An important difference with Larkspur is the known presence of an endangered species. Categorical Exemptions from CEQA, which the City is claiming, cannot be used where endangered species could be adversely impacted.

The potential adverse impacts to endangered species of loose dogs in Piper Park are clear and obvious. Piper Park is a filled tidal marsh surrounded by a remnant patch, one of just a few tidal marshes left along Corte Madera Creek. There is no safe refugia habitat, only a few patches of vegetation along the Park's upland and tidal marsh interface. Most of this transition zone is wide open and inviting for dogs to run into and through the marsh after a bird or other wildlife. The marsh is a known habitat for the endangered Ridgway's Rail.

Historic marshes occupied all of the flatlands between Larkspur and the Greenbrae hills. This and the other tidal marshes are

habitat for the endangered Ridgway's Rail. Our Christmas Bird Count team observed a Rail adjacent to the Park on a recent count. During this past year's count, there were lots of loose dogs running around, disturbing the uplands birds and us. Early morning is an important time for land birds to feed and could be for marsh-dependent species. Shorebirds feed at lower tides, which can occur, of course, in the morning.

At the Council hearing, dog owners gave emotional descriptions of the importance of their dogs being able to run loose. Several reported their dogs as being uncomfortable on a leash in the dog park, which the City just built at a high cost. Most stated the importance of their dogs socializing with other dogs.

MAS does not support unleashed dogs where they can adversely affect endangered species of birds and other wildlife. Our

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Board Elections Coming Up

Next month at our Annual Meeting, members will vote on the slate of nominees for the MAS Board. MAS's bylaws require that notice of the slate of nominees be presented to members 20 days before the election, which will take place at our Annual Meeting, at our Speaker Series Program, on Thursday, May 8. This year's nominees are returning Board Members:

- Doug Waterman
- Ellena Ochoa
- James Raives
- Jude Stalker

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the appropriate Board member.

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President	Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
Secretary	Lelia Lanctot 924-6138
Treasurer	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
Conservation	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org Alison Pence 254-4451
Membership Chair	Bob Hinz 383-8688 Contact Bob for membership problems or questions.
Outreach, Media	Michele Miller lavocat14@gmail.com
Outreach, Website	Cary Sparks cary@holotropic.com
Speaker Series	Mike Anderson 990-9784
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Michael Anderson mdander65@gmail.com Alison Pence alipence9@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
Property Real Estate	James Raives 497-4492
Volunteer Coordinator	Ellena Ochoa volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org
BAAC Reps	Barbara Salzman 924-605 Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
At-large Director	Lowell Sykes 388-2821

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. 6:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month. Meetings are currently held online via Zoom. If you wish to participate please call 924-6057.

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only) Marin Audubon Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Website: www.marinaudubon.org

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org.

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$500 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species, and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

President's Letter

By Barbara Salzman

As the difficult times and threats to the environment continue, joining with others of a similar mind often makes folks feel better. The Coastal Commission now is under attack, our rivers and streams are under threat from increased water diversions, and climate programs are being cancelled. Your message to decision-makers can make a difference. There are several matters in this issue of *The Rail*. One is to write our legislators in support of the Coastal Commission. Even if they are of a different political party, they should hear about your support and they can talk to other congressmen in Washington about public support. The second is a local problem: speaking up for the Ridgway's Rail at Larkspur's Piper Park by urging the Council to keep dogs on leash. (See article on page 1) Don't neglect local conservation issues. In the face of national threats and turmoil, you may be more effective on local issues.

A warm welcome to our newest board member, Cary Sparks. Cary describes herself as a relatively new and enthusiastic birder. She gets a lot of joy from birding, participating in our field trips and Christmas Bird Count. She met some of the board members on various MAS field trips and CBCs. She currently serves on three nonprofit boards. For over 30 years, Cary has been a small business owner/administrator, and her work has given her experience that we need to outreach to our members. Cary

will be taking over the Technical Outreach position and the one remaining year of the term currently held by Elyse Omernick. The position involves maintaining our website and other tasks keeping our members abreast of our activities. You'll be hearing from her in the near future.

Thank you to our Nominating Committee members Mike Anderson (Chair), Lelia Lanctot, and Alison Pence for their work finding our new Board member, Cary Sparks, and for filling our full terms for the next three years.

We've written about resource needs in our last two newsletters. Point Blue Conservation Science's research and monitoring programs on the Farallon Islands and the Estuary and Ocean Science Center facility are still in need of funding. To donate to keep the Estuary and Ocean Science Center open, go to <https://bit.ly/4iweIej>. You can donate to the Farallones through Marin Audubon Society, by sending a check to:

Marin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 599
Mill Valley, CA 94942

Please note on the check that the contributions are for the Farallones.

Spring is an exciting time with birds migrating through Marin to their breeding grounds to the north, and others migrating in to breed here. Join a Marin Audubon field trip to enjoy the birds and the outdoors with fellow bird lovers.

Small Wetlands to Lose

Unfortunately, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board is about to sign an agreement with Ducks Unlimited (DU) that allows wetlands to be filled in exchange for paying money (in lieu fee). The plan is to allow applicants to fill small (it is not clear how small is defined) wetlands and pay a fee that DU will use to create bigger wetlands. This is the first in lieu fee program for wetland in our area. This is a huge disappointment because it is sure to result in the loss of many small wetlands.

We have long appreciated the Water Board for being the only agency that did not sign on to the agency mitigation bank program supported by other regulatory agencies years ago. An in lieu fee program is worse. We won't even know where the mitigation is taking place. At least with a mitigation bank one knew where, and if, the mitigation would occur.

Most importantly, this program ignores the value of many small wetlands: property

boundaries are artificial, and many small wetlands are actually function as part of larger adjacent wetland systems, or could be connected to larger wetlands that are nearby. Also smaller wetlands are often safety valves providing habitat for wildlife if larger wetlands are destroyed or damaged. We have asked for the In Lieu Program Plan and whether the Regional Board is requiring environmental review and public noticing.

MAS Board Needs

We need help with some of the tasks supporting the Treasurer's function. The work involves data entry and clerical tasks related to finances. If interested, please contact Mike Anderson for more information at 415/990-9784.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

MAS is providing a full schedule of free field trips for the 2024–2025 season.

Registration is required for our trips with size limits, which are used to prevent overcrowding. Registration will open 10 days prior to the trip date on the Marin Audubon website's Field Trips page.

Trips can fill up quickly. If a trip is closed when you try to register, use the "contact organizer" and request to be put on the waiting list. **If you are unable to attend a trip you signed up for, use "Contact Organizer" to cancel so that someone on the waiting list will have an opportunity to attend.**

In some instances, trip signups aren't available precisely at 8 AM but it doesn't mean the trip is full. PLEASE TRY TO REGISTER AGAIN A FEW MINUTES LATER.

THE PONDS AT THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD)

San Rafael

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Thursday, May 1, 2025

8:30 AM to noon

With Mark Clark

All participants are welcome to join this trip.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels, especially beginning birders, to join leader Mark Clark on our monthly first Thursday walk around the ponds at Las Gallinas. On our search we'll be looking for waterfowl, waders, songbirds, raptors, rails and swallows. We are likely to spot some interesting species, so come assist in our search.

The packed dirt paths around the ponds are wide, flat and easy to navigate. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about 0.5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There is a portable restroom in the parking area for public use.

FIVE BROOKS/ BEAR VALLEY

Birding in Marin, Season 10 – Trip 4

Saturday, April 5, 2025

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required. Registration opens at 8 AM on March 26, 2025 on the MAS website's field trips page.

Join Jim and Bob for an easy walk around the Five Brooks pond with a chance to see beautiful Wood ducks. Our late master Rich Stallcup installed wood duck nesting boxes with a little of my help back in the 1990s. Bob and I with some consistent help refurbish the boxes each spring. We will also have a chance to see some woodpeckers including the large and loud Pileated as well as other forest birds.

The Bear Valley visitor center will be our second area to visit where we like to take another gentle walk around the Earth Quake Trail. We hope to find some recently arrived nesting birds such as **Warbling Vireo, Western Wood Pewee, Black-headed Grosbeaks and Pacific Slope Flycatchers.**

Bring lunch and drinks. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at the Five Brooks parking lot. Take Hwy 1 north 17 miles from Mill Valley, or 8 miles from Stinson Beach or 5 miles South of Olema at the Sir Francis Drake Blvd intersection. There is a 1/4 mile access road up to the parking area.

RODEO LAGOON

Marin Headlands

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

7:30 AM to noon

With William Legge and David Wiechers

Registration required. Registration opens at 8 AM on April 13, 2025 on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

With spring migration underway, we'll be looking out for migrant wildfowl, shorebirds, grebes, loons and passerines. As usual, the weather will dictate our focus with onshore northwest winds ideal for spring sea watches, while offshore easterly winds promise a good selection of passerine migrants. Join us for a Sea Watch at 7:30 AM or arrive later at 8:15 AM for a circuit of the lagoon. A brief mid-morning 'coffee-stop' is planned at Headlands Center for the Arts. Your contribution to the coffee 'tip-jar' would be appreciated. This field trip is less suitable for beginners.

DIRECTIONS: Head south on Hwy 101 and take the last Sausalito exit just before the Golden Gate Bridge. At the exit stop sign, turn right and go under the freeway, then follow the road down to the left. Within 300 feet turn left at the sign to the Marin Headlands; this is the only available left turn before you begin the descent into Sausalito. You should see the tunnel with the five-minute signal light. Proceed through the tunnel on Bunker Rd to the Rodeo Lagoon Parking Lot at the end and meet by the bridge over the channel to the beach.

ROY'S REDWOODS PRESERVE

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

8:30 AM to noon

With Liz Lewis

Registration required. Registration opens on April 20 at 8 AM on the MAS Field Trips page.

As we saunter along the Roy's Redwood loop trail and the newly restored

floodplains and meadows, spring migrant arrivals we will be looking (and listening) for are **Warbling Vireo, Wilson's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Wood Pewee, Western Flycatcher and Ash-throated Flycatcher.**

Besides listening and looking for migrants, we will also seek out the resident species who nest in Roy's Redwoods: including **Hairy Woodpecker, Pacific Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hutton's Vireo** and several raptors. The trail is generally flat with a moderate rise. Please remember to dress in layers and to bring water and snacks. There is a portable bathroom available at the trailhead.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at Roy's Redwoods Preserve trailhead, on Nicasio Valley Rd, about 0.5 north of Sir Francis Drake Blvd or about 3.5 miles south of Lucas Valley Rd. Parking is available along Nicasio Valley Rd near the trailhead.

MOUNT BURDELL/STAFFORD LAKE OR RUSH CREEK, Novato

Birding in Marin, Season 10 – Trip 5

Saturday, May 3, 2025

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

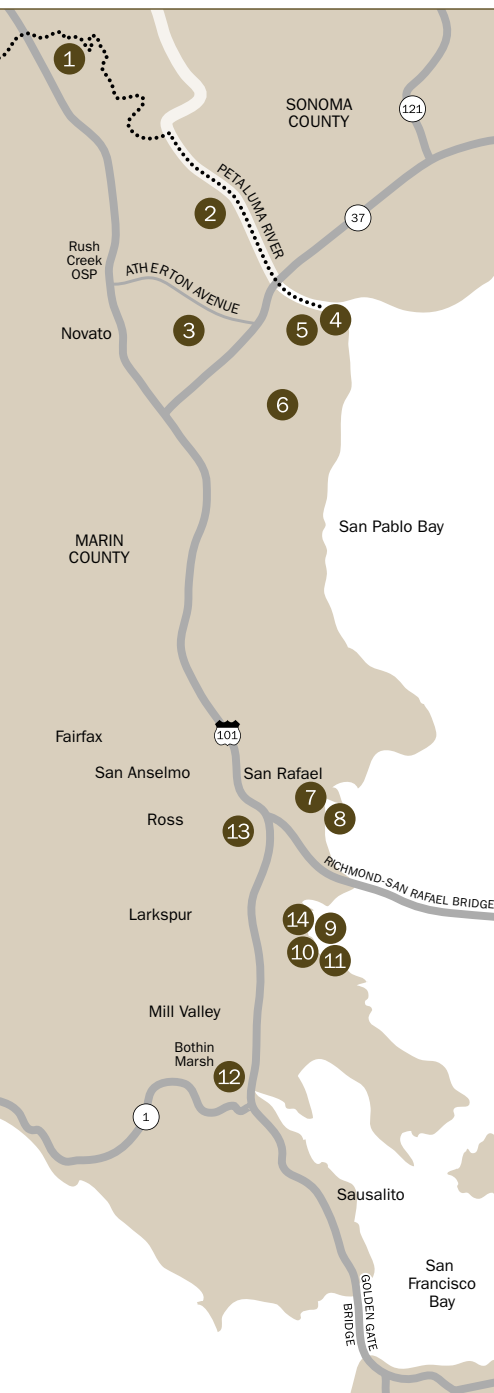
Registration required. Registration opens April 23 at 8:00 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Join Jim and Bob for a field trip to the gentle slopes of Mount Burdell where we'll listen to and observe the impressive variety of songbirds that make this area their springtime home. Species we might see include **Lark Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole, Lazuli Bunting and Grasshopper Sparrow**, among many other possibilities. In the afternoon, we plan to continue birding at Stafford Lake or Rush Creek.

This will be a moderate hike with many opportunities to look at birds and spring wildflowers. Wear comfortable walking shoes and layered clothing. Bring lunch and drinks. We will meet at the end of San Andreas Drive in Novato.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 to Novato, exit at the San Marin Dr/Atherton Ave exit. At the end of the exit ramp, turn left (west) on San Andreas Dr. Drive nearly to the end of the road and park on the street. No restrooms available.

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Unleashed Dogs at Piper Park

continued from page 1

recommendation is to continue the current ordinance, which prohibits the bringing in of any living thing that “constitutes a safety hazard or detriment to the enjoyment of the area by the public.” There has been testimony from residents who are afraid of dogs, feel unsafe around dogs, and whose enjoyment of the outdoors is significantly reduced by dogs. Any change to the current ordinance that would allow for loose dogs would need to comply with CEQA and that would at least require a Negative Declaration to identify potential impacts of the Pilot Project and mitigations for those impacts. The Council appeared more concerned about being sued and showed minimal interest in the safety of endangered species or residents. Let’s hope they change their approach.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Let the Larkspur City Council know you want endangered species and land birds protected. All dogs in public places should be on leashes. Send comment to:

Mayor Catherine Way
Larkspur City Hall, 400 Magnolia Ave.
Larkspur, CA 94939.
Cway@cityoflarkspur.org

AIR TOUR SUIT WINS IN COURT, BUT WITH UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. District Circuit has directed the National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration (NPS/FAA) to conduct an environmental impact analysis and produce an Air Tour Management Plan governing fixed-wing and helicopter tours over the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco National Maritime Museum, Point Reyes National Seashore, and Muir Woods National Monument. The court gave the agencies one year to complete the environmental assessment and Management Plan. These directives are the result of our lawsuit over the inadequacy of the environmental review of the Air Tour Plan.

This ruling followed a lower court ruling in our case brought by the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), on behalf of the Marin Audubon Society and the Watershed Alliance of Marin, against the FAA/NPS for non-compliance of the Air Tour Management Plan with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In our case, a three-judge federal appellate court panel

unanimously agreed that the San Francisco Bay Air Tours Management Plan produced by the agencies violated NEPA. The judges found that the agencies described the baseline (existing) conditions the same way they described the project. In other words, they were comparing the project with itself. Under these circumstances, it is most unlikely that the impacts of the project would be identified.

While the D.C. Circuit Court found that the current plan to be out of compliance, it allowed the Plan to remain in effect during the year the two agencies are directed to prepare a new Plan that complies with NEPA. To that end, the court issued a “stay of issuance of the mandate” based on the agreement of all parties that it is better to keep the current, flawed plan in place while the agencies complete their environmental analysis and Management Plan, because cancelling the current Plan would have left the earlier, unregulated condition in place.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Unintended Results

In an unexpected turn of events, two of the three judges on the panel took the matter further and determined that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) had no regulatory authority, even though it had been operating with regulatory authority for 20 years. PEER attorneys, working with Earthjustice attorneys, took a challenge of the CEQ ruling up to the 12-judge, full D.C. Circuit court. The majority of the circuit court judges agreed that the two panel judges had issued an opinion on the CEQ regulations that was unnecessary to decide the case, and that that part of the opinion should be ignored by the D.C. court going forward (basically, it was “dicta,” or irrelevant).

However, events in the D.C. Circuit were overtaken by President Trump issuing on day one an Executive Order (EO) that basically directed the CEQ to rescind its NEPA-implementing regulations. Fortunately, his EO did not mention the Marin Audubon Society. Shortly thereafter, the CEQ rescinded the regulations in the Federal Register. Before the Federal Register announcement, a district court in North Dakota that was fully briefed on the CEQ’s NEPA-implementing regulations, also ruled them to be invalid.

Future Actions

Our attorneys agree there are no more appeals that make sense for the CEQ regulations validity issue. There is nowhere else to go. The matter is now with the various federal agencies to adopt their own separate regulations to implement NEPA.

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh Expansion Site	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	144 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	4 parcels
5. Black Point Parcels	many parcels
6. Arroyo San Jose	2 parcels
7. Tiscornia Marsh	20 acres
8. Tidelands and Murphy's Rock	34 acres
9. San Clemente Creek Tidelands	4.34 acres
10. End of Channel Drive	1 acre
11. Triangle Marsh	31 acres
12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio	2 acres
13. Cal Park	<1 acre
14. Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion Site	5.2 acres

In the meantime, PEER attorneys will be working to get the relief in our Air Tour case fully implemented by the NPS/FAA. We have to be sure they comply with the court directive by preparing a management plan that is fully reviewed under NEPA, as required by the court. We will be looking out for the draft Environmental Assessment/Management Plan when it is released for public review and will submit comments on its adequacy.

It is unfortunate that Marin Audubon's name will forever be attached to the demise of the CEQ NEPA-implementing regulations. It was beyond our wildest thoughts to have CEQ regulatory authority eliminated as a result of an unrelated suit we were involved in. Again, it was fortunate our name was not mentioned in the EO.

As we go to press, we've learned that the Center for Biodiversity has taken up the cause and has sued to restore the regulatory authority of the CEQ.

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING SR 37 UPDATE

In spite of significant opposition and a recommendation from the PEL process, Caltrans continues to pursue the interim project; i.e., the raising of State Route 37 from SR 121 to Mare Island up on fill instead of a raised causeway, which would allow tidal flow north of SR 37.

On the positive side, Caltrans announced it is looking into alternative locations for the tolling gantry (the booth where tolls will be collected). The purpose of the search is to address public concerns about travelers from the east bearing the burden of paying most of the tolls and "well-to-do" drivers from the west paying very little.

COASTAL COMMISSION NEEDS SUPPORT

There is much concern about the current attack on the California Coastal Commission. The Commission was established in 1972 as a result of public uprising over development (specifically Sea Ranch) that would have cut off public access to California's spectacular coast. A successful voter initiative declared the policy of the State to be "to preserve, protect, and where possible restore the resources of the coastal zone..." and ultimately the Coastal Act was passed establishing the Coastal Commission. Over its 53 years the Commission has been incredibly



Air Tour Plane on Richardson Bay

successful keeping the California coastal in a natural state, protecting it from damaging uses for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

Thanks to the Commission, tens of thousands of shorebirds are thriving on our beaches and in our wetlands; pelagic birds are able to nest on coastal islands and forage undisturbed in coastal waters, the public is able to access the spectacular shoreline and enjoy incredible views of coastal resources along our undeveloped shoreline. Indeed, the California coast would look much different if it weren't for the Commission. Without the Commission's oversight, we would have fewer birds and marine mammals because there would be less habitat, more coastline development, more ripped shoreline to protect the developments, and more water pollution. But their ability to deny or significantly modify development has made them the target of powerful interests.

Now the Commission needs the public to step forward to express its appreciation and speak out to ensure the Commission continues its essential work.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Write your U.S. Congress member and Senators and urge them to make your support for the California Coastal Commission known in Washington.

U.S. Congress Member Jared Huffman
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202/225-5161

U.S. Senator Alex Padilla
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510
Phone: 208/224-3553

U.S. Senator Adam Schiff
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510
Phone: 208-224-3841

Buy an MAS Hat!



The hats are made in the USA of high quality materials. Each hat is tan with dark green contrast along the outer edge of the visor.

The front is embroidered with the Marin Audubon Ridgway's Rail logo designed by **local artist and birder Keith Hansen**.

"Marin Audubon Society" is embroidered on the back which has a tuck-in strap with a slide buckle.

We are offering these hats for \$30.00 each – by cash or check.

They will be available to purchase in person on most field trips or by arrangement.

If you would like to have a hat mailed to you, there will be an additional **\$6 postage fee**.

To place an order, please contact Jude Stalker, judestalker@gmail.com.

THANK YOU, DONORS

Elizabeth Anderson, Jeanne Azen, Nima Catani, Nusi Decker, Carl Dulsberg, Michelle Friend, Jeanette Gustafson, David Hudson, Hallie Inglehart, Barbara Kautz, David Kimball, Joleen Kruegar, Paul Larkin, Gillian Ludwig, Nancy Anne Marshall, Gerald Meral, Christina Oldenburg, Charles & Patricia Raven, Charlotte Reiter, John Young & Kathleen Moran

DONATE YOUR CAR TO MAS

Looking for deductions on your taxes? You may qualify for a write-off if you donate your unwanted car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or boat.

It's easy, just contact CARS. They will pick up your car, sell it, and after paying their costs, give the rest to Marin Audubon Society.

If you would like to donate your car, follow this Marin Audubon Society link <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/Marin-Audubon-Society> to the CARS website where you can start the vehicle donation process or call 855/500-7433.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The flowering period for weeds as well as native plants is beginning. We will now start to pull Italian thistle before it produces the seeds that grow next year. Lopping off the Harding grass now will slow its growth and reduce seed production even if we can't dig it all out. Bristly ox-tongue, vetch at the Corte Madera Marsh site and teasel at Triangle Marsh have been reduced but not enough. The rainy season is ending, so mulching plants now will save soil moisture for the next six months.

Earn community service hours or just get satisfaction by leaving the area better than you found it. If you like our birds or native plants, volunteer on a workday to give them a boost. It is also an opportunity to learn more about a native habitat of your county and be a part of improving it.

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: April 5, May 3

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive between the Ring Mountain Phyllis Ellman trailhead and the Montessori School.

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: April 12, May 10

Meet at the end of Industrial Way near Trader Joe's in Greenbrae.

For up-to-date information, contact Martha Jarocki, 415/461-3592 or marthajarocki@gmail.com.

Bahia, Novato:

If you'd like to help, please contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

Thank You, Stewardship Volunteers

Debbie Ablin, Annette Anzalone, Belle & Ron Guelden, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Susan Meffert & Eiden Metcalfe, Alison Pence, Lowell Sykes

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Jessica Beckham, Marsha H. Berman, Sarah Brightwood, Diane Chambers, Eleanor S. Childs, Austin Fernald, Eva Foley, Dennis D. Freeman, Vida Freeman, Margaret L. Gensel, Karin Hern, Sue Krenek, Lori Litwin, Alma Mainwaring, Elizabeth C. Moore, Paul & Leslie Mulligan, Katherine Newhall, Mary Owens, Mary Quinlan, Robert Rees, Jennifer Wolff, Mardi Wood

Habitat Stewardship

BOARD TOURS NORTH PROPERTIES

Every year Marin Audubon Board members visit our properties. Now that we own so many properties, we can't fit visiting them all in one day. On February 22, we visited our properties north of San Rafael; we visited our properties in southern Marin last fall.

We began at our Petaluma Marsh Expansion property, located at the northernmost part of the county, on San Antonio Creek. We call it the "Petaluma Marsh Expansion" property we expanded it to again become part of the Petaluma Marsh, the largest tidal marsh in the state. We purchased this property in 2001, and in 2008 restored the 100 acres that had been diked back to tidal action. The rest of the property was and is tidal marsh. The restored marsh looks great.

At our next stop, Bahia, we looked at the plants that had been planted in the seasonal wetlands and along sections of the levee this past January. Then, at our 135-acre property on Simmons Slough, we found that the sheet mulching, which had been put in by the Conservation Corps North Bay, had quite effectively prevented the growth of Harding grass. Next, we visited our properties at Black Point, specifically our seasonal wetlands and adjacent uplands at Baywood and Holcomb, and the pond and wetlands on Norton Avenue. We found that the pond, which receives muted tidal action from the Petaluma River through a long channel, had a lower water level than we are used to seeing at this time of year. This is undoubtedly related to the removal last year of the blockage in the culvert. Now there is increased water exchange and less water retention. The last visit was to Arroyo San Jose, where we own a small section that extends east from Bel Marin Keys Boulevard. This property supports large, majestic valley oaks and, unfortunately, an understory completely dominated by non-native species, including French broom, English ivy, and harding grass.

We generally found all of the properties to be in good condition but in need of some enhancement. At the Petaluma Marsh, we decided that removal of the non-native species on the levee would be beneficial. At Bahia, we are continuing the planting of native species in the seasonal wetland and along the levee in areas that are either unvegetated or vegetated with non-natives. At Simmons, we have more harding grass to remove, and we'll need to start planting natives in the sheet-mulched areas. At Black Point, the broom and ice plant need

to be removed. At Arroyo San Jose, the many invasive species include broom, English ivy and acacia.

We've lots more work to do, and we welcome all who would like to help us maintain one or more of our properties. For more information, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Ellena Ochoa at volunteercoordinator@marinauduborn.org.

TISCORNA MARSH RESTORATION UPDATE

Our Tiscornia team is in the process of revising the project design. After several years of trying to satisfy Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) while accommodating the current design of our project, it has become clear that this is not possible.

As we've reported earlier, the issue has been PG&E's question about the stability of the tower on MAS's property. PG&E believes the coarse beach structure we've designed to stabilize the marsh and shoreline and retain sediment poses a risk to the stability of the transmission tower. Our engineers have tried moving it farther away, lowering the height and reducing the weight, but Caltrans wants 100 percent certainty there is no risk. The only way to do that would be to move the coarse beach farther out into the Bay and build it on virgin mudflat (mudflat that has never supported any weight), instead of on mudflat that has supported tidal marsh in the past and that has eroded away. This is what we have been proposing. Building on virgin mudflat would pose stability, construction and permitting issues.

So, we've come to the difficult decision that we have to revise our project design to reduce the length of the coarse beach structure so that it is further from the tower. That means we will not reuse dredge sediment and will be restoring less tidal marsh. But we will still have an increase in tidal marsh, albeit small, and still have a coarse beach to provide habitat and protect the shoreline levee, albeit reduced. We've reviewed our plan with the regulatory agencies and, although we're disappointed at having to reduce the size of restored marsh, we are relieved the agencies are accepting the revised design.

Our hydrologic and geotechnical engineers are now working on a specific design, after which we'll have to revise our applications for regulatory permits. We'll report again when we are further along with the design.

Marin Birdlog: February 2025

By Noah Arthur

With signs of spring in the form of blooming willows and **Allen's Hummingbirds** back on territory, February is still a month for winter rarities in Marin. The first potentially new find this time around was a **Montana/merrilli Song Sparrow** at Rodeo Lagoon on the 3rd (WL), though it may have been the same bird seen briefly in November. Petaluma Marsh/Rush Creek produced two good ducks on the 5th, males of **Tufted Duck** and **Green-winged X Common Teal hybrid** (WL). The Tufted is likely the same individual that was there last season. A new Glaucous Gull popped into Tomales Bay on the 6th (NW), a 1st-winter bird as expected this far south, and was seen for several days after feeding on herring spawn.

Up at the north edge of the county on the 8th, a presumably wintering male **Yellow Warbler** was found in ranch trees near Valley Ford (MS & LS). On the 10th, a **Chipping Sparrow** was at Albert Park in San Rafael (MK).

An unusual gull at Cypress Grove on the 12th (NW) resembled a 2nd-winter Glaucous but with dark eyes and slightly smaller, more elongated structure, though still a size up from typical Kumlien's Gull. This is an example of the so-called "Giant Kumlien's Gull," a



recurring, unidentified, likely hybrid type seen annually on the California coast.

Yet another **Tufted Duck** this time a female, was on Pacheco Pond on the 15th (AM), adding to the exceptional pile of Tufted records in Marin this season.

Probably more underreported than rare, an '**Alberta**' Gull (California Gull subspecies *albertaensis*) was at Belvedere on the 16th (WL). An incursion of yellow-rumps at DL's yard in San Rafael included a **Myrtle X Audubon's Warbler hybrid** on the 17th (DL). A female **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found on the 22nd in Pt. Reyes Station (MJ), a town where this species seems to be annual in ones and twos.

The last rare find of the month was also the rarest, a flyover adult **American Goshawk** that ripped across the Giacomini Wetlands on the 25th, setting off a frenzy of alarm calls from the local Red-shouldered Hawk (KK)

OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS: WL: William Legge, NW: Nils Warnock, MS: Mark Stephenson, LS: Lucas Stephenson, MK: Maxwell Keetch, AM: Alex Merritt, DL: Derek Lecy, MJ: Megan Jankowski, KK: Kelly Krechmer



Allen's Hummingbird

Mary Sharrock, CC BY-SA 4.0

FIELD TRIPS

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BIRDING THE NAPA RIVER BY BOAT

Vallejo Marina

Monday, May 5, 2025

8:30 AM to 12:30 PM

With Jude Stalker

Registration required. Registration opens April 10, 2025 at 8 AM on the Marin Audubon website's Field Trips page.

This trip begins at the historic Vallejo and Mare Island waterfronts and continues into a different world, one of vineyards, backwater homes, and some of the largest contiguous marshes in the Bay Area. Even before leaving the dock, you'll spot diving ducks and grebes feeding. At Mare Island, you'll pass **Ospreys** and egrets roosting in nearby trees. As the boat passes under Highway 37, you might even catch a pair of **Peregrine Falcons** during this springtime cruise alongside the Napa/Sonoma marshes. A variety of raptor species

are common and occasionally both golden and bald eagles are seen.

The trip costs \$120. A waitlist will open if the trip sells out. Join the waitlist by clicking the Contact Organizer prompt. If you cancel your registration more than one week before the start of the trip and we can fill your spot with someone else on the waitlist, you will be reimbursed unless you would like to convert your registration fee into a tax-deductible donation to MAS.

DIRECTIONS: Ticketholders will receive instructions and directions to the Vallejo Marina, approximately one week prior to the trip.



Peregrine Falcon

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REPORT BARRED OWL SIGHTINGS

Barred Owls have extended their range to the west coast and have been seen in Marin. There is increasing concern about their impact on Marin's Northern Spotted Owl population. Barred Owls are larger, more aggressive and occupy the same habitat type as Spotted Owls. See contact list at marinaudubon.org/2020/09/01/alert-report-barred-owl-spottings.

Peregrine Falcon © 2014, Alan D. Wilson, www.naturespicsonline.com



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SAVE THE DATE

May 09 **Speaker Series: Flycatchers**
7 PM *With Cin-Ty Lee and Andy Birch*

May 21 **Field Trip: Rodeo Lagoon**
7:30 AM *With William Legge and David Wiechers*

June 05 **Field Trip: Las Gallinas Ponds**
8:30 AM *With Mark Clark*

June 07 **Field Trip: Big Rock**
8:30 AM *With Jim White and Bob Battagin*

Check website for updates and details

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SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

We invite you to become a Chapter-Supporting member of Marin Audubon Society (MAS) to support our important habitat protection and restoration work, conservation advocacy, our full calendar of birding field trips and speakers and our newsletter, *The Rail*. Marin Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon (NAS). However, becoming a **Chapter-Supporting Member** of MAS is separate and distinct from a membership in NAS. While MAS works with NAS on issues of mutual concern, we are a separate non-profit Section 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization. Marin-based NAS members do receive this MAS newsletter, *The Rail*, however we encourage all NAS members to also become Chapter-Supporting members of MAS to support our local work. Very little of our funding comes from NAS, and we rely on our MAS Chapter-Supporting members and donors to help us fund our land acquisitions, restorations, habitat protection, conservation advocacy, this newsletter and our local programs.

If you're not already a Chapter-Supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors and relatives to join us, too.

You can join MAS or make a donation on our website using your credit card or PayPal by going to www.marinaudubon.org. Alternatively, you can join by filling out this form and sending us your payment by mail.

ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON FOR THE FIRST TIME.

MAS will receive 100% of your initial membership if you enter **MAS's chapter code C04** on your application. To join, go to www.audubon.org/join.

The best option for the birds: Join MAS **and** NAS.

Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

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